



PRESS RELEASE

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THREE PEOPLE INDICTED FOR IDENTITY THEFT AND DEFRAUDING SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAMS

PHOENIX, ARIZONA -- The United States Attorney's Office for the District of Arizona, announced today that on August 27, 2002, a Federal Grand Jury at Phoenix, AZ returned indictments against three individuals for identity theft and defrauding Social Security benefits programs of more than \$186,000.00. The indictments, resulting from investigations by agents of the Phoenix Office of the Inspector General/Social Security Administration and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, charged Theft of Government Property, Identity Theft, Bank Fraud, and Social Security Fraud.

Named in the indictments were:

- **Lori M. Griffin, aka Lori Merritt**, Phoenix, AZ, was charged with identity theft and Social Security number (SSN) misuse. Griffin used the identity and social security number of a Pennsylvania woman to purchase automobiles, secure credit, and rent an apartment.
- **Mary Anthony Vosburgh, aka Mary A. Vlabos**, Phoenix, AZ, was charged with theft of government property, bank fraud, and Social Security fraud for conversion to her own use \$160.645 in Social Security benefits payments to which she was not entitled. Vosburgh, whose mother had been receiving SSA retirement benefits payments prior to her death in 1981, concealed her mother's death from SSA and continued to receive and convert the monthly SSA checks to her own use.
- **Diana Brown**, Phoenix, AZ, was charged with theft of government property and conversion of \$25,424 in Social Security benefits payments to which she was not entitled. Brown, Representative Payee for her minor son, applied for

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and converted to her own use Spouse and Child survivor's benefits payments even though her minor son was never in her custody.

Each theft of government property count carries a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine. Each Social Security fraud count carries a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine. A conviction for bank fraud carries a maximum penalty of 30 years imprisonment and a \$1,000,000 fine, and a conviction for identity theft carries a maximum penalty of 15 years imprisonment and a \$300,000 fine. An indictment is simply the method by which a person is charged with criminal activity and raises no inference of guilt. An individual is presumed innocent until competent evidence is presented to a jury that establishes guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The indictments are the result of a joint effort between the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Arizona and the Social Security Administration/Office of the Inspector General to identify and prosecute identity theft and fraud against Social Security benefit programs. The investigations preceding the indictments were conducted by agents of the Office of the Inspector General/Social Security Administration, agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and detectives of the Surprise Police Department. The prosecution is being handled by John K. Webb, Special Assistant United States Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix, Arizona.

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